

Remarks/Arguments

The Office Action of September 8, 2003 and the references cited therein have been carefully studied and reviewed, and in view of the foregoing Amendment and following representations, reconsideration is respectfully requested.

The specification has been amended so as to now refer to the “material” of the pad 32b as being non-ferrous. Such a description is supported by the original disclosure of the pad 32b being preferably of a rubbery material. Moreover, claims 4 and 14 have been canceled, and claims 1 and 7 have been amended to recite that the pad 32b is of a rubbery material. Accordingly, the rejection under 35 USC 112, first paragraph, has been rendered moot.

Also, claims 1 and 7 now recite that the pad 32b has parallel grooves that extend all the way across the upper surface thereof, as shown in FIG. 6. This design allows for the vacuum in the processing chamber to act on the rear surface of a wafer resting on the pad (par. [0125]). The rubbery material of the pad 32b enhances the ability of the vacuum to maintain the wafer in position on the pad 32b.

Tanaka et al. only disclose an embodiment (FIGS. 4 and 5) in which grooves 43 terminate at a location radially inwardly from the outer peripheral edge of a susceptor 5. The design of the grooves is to facilitate a discharge of gas between a gap that may exist between the outer edge of the wafer and the receptor (col. 5, lines, 17 – 24).

Therefore, even assuming, arguendo, that one of ordinary skill in the art were motivated to have modified the APA of FIG. 1 by incorporating grooves into the pad 12a in the manner taught by Tanaka et al. for the purpose of discharging gas between the wafer W and the pad 12a, the resulting combination would still not meet Applicant's amended claims 1 and 7 as such a resulting combination would not have the grooves extending all the way across the surface of the pad 12a from one side thereof to the other. Thus, the combination of the prior art does not render Applicant's claims obvious under 35 USC 103.

Accordingly, early reconsideration and allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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